

**Veterans Green Jobs Academy
Graduation Ceremony
National Renewable Energy Laboratory
June 2, 2009**

By Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.

Thank you, Brett, for that kind introduction. It's great to be here. I also want to acknowledge state Senator Gail Schwartz, who's here today. She is one of the best partners I have in the Statehouse working on clean energy issues. She sponsored a number of significant bills that have transformed how we in this state think about public policy to support energy issues. Thank you, Gail. Give her a round of applause if you will.

It's really an honor to be a commencement speaker today. Thanks to the graduates for allowing me that privilege and that honor.

Thanks also to NREL for partnering in this really incredible program. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory is such a crown jewel for our research corridor on renewable energy. We are very, very fortunate in this state. When I talk about Colorado outside of Colorado, I talk about this being the best research corridor in America, maybe the world, where renewable energy is concerned, and so far no one has disagreed with me. And as governor, you take that for being right, if nobody disagrees with you.

This Veterans Green Jobs initiative is a win-win-win. It's another stepping stone for us in the New Energy Economy. It certainly helps protect the environment and climate change, and it continues our efforts to marry environmental issues with energy and energy consumption and energy production issues.

It also helps re-engage and retrain so many of these great military veterans for the civilian workforce of tomorrow. Thanks to programs like this we are creating a new energy future for America. We are positioning Colorado for a strong recovery and a sustainable future. Not just sustainability in how we consume energy, but really sustainable jobs – 21st century jobs that will last into the future.

In just 2½ short years, we have made Colorado a national and international leader in the New Energy Economy. We're creating thousands of jobs all across the state. Even in this downturn, we've been opening up manufacturing plants for solar and thin-film photovoltaics. Some of the newest technology in manufacturing photovoltaic is here in Colorado, and some of it came out of NREL. CSU partnered with NREL, and now we have Abound Solar and 200 manufacturing jobs.

Wind turbines are being manufactured in this state. Vestas from Denmark came to Colorado, creating 2,500 new jobs over two years and making a \$750 million investment to build wind turbines here in Colorado, the blades in one place, the nacelles in another place and the towers in Pueblo.

We're building new solar farms and new wind farms in northern Colorado and along the Eastern Plains and throughout Southern Colorado.

Thanks to public, private and governmental partnerships, we're making it easier and more affordable for people all across Colorado to install solar and wind and geothermal, to weatherize their homes, to install energy-efficient windows and appliances.

We also are partnering with community colleges and other organizations to provide training so we can develop this New Energy Economy workforce of tomorrow, which is exactly why we're here today.

Before we get to the business of honoring the graduates, I want to announce that the State of Colorado, the U.S. Department of Energy, NREL and Veterans Green Jobs will be establishing the first National Training Demonstration Center in Energy Efficiency right here.

Together, these partners will be working to retrofit and improve efficiency in buildings all across the country. This will be the first national training center, and it's going to be here in Colorado.

We are excited that Colorado has been chosen to be the location for the first training center. It's because of the vision we have and have been putting in place for the last 2½ years and last three legislative sessions. It's a vision that our kids will not consume or produce energy the way we did 10 or 20 years ago. If you think 20 or 30 years out, our children and grandchildren are going to live in a different world, and it will be a world we are creating today depending upon the kinds of technologies that we ultimately commercialize. It will be a world that will have to take far more care in what carbon is emitted into the atmosphere.

That's why, looking at renewable technologies as one part of it, energy efficiency as one part of it – it all fits into this different world that they'll live in, a world that we believe can over time become carbon free. It's not just wistful thinking or wishful thinking, it's an imperative that we do that for our children, for their sake, for their health, for the planet's sake.

Now, to the business at hand, honoring these 15 veterans for completing the Green Jobs Academy's Home Energy Auditor Training – or HEAT -- program.

Graduates, we certainly owe you a debt of gratitude because you are veterans. This is a state with more than 400,000 veterans living here. We are mindful of the important role you have played in national security. You committed yourselves to a form of public service that is unique, noble and sometimes carries the greatest of all sacrifices.

One of the ways we honor you is by giving you an opportunity to create a different future for yourselves and your family.

Last April, I attended the largest National Guard send-off this state has seen since World War II. I asked those brave men and women to serve well in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I also said that Colorado would take care of their families while they were gone, and that we would take care of them upon their return.

This academy is just one example of the things we can do to ensure we are watching out for you and for your future.

The President of the United States understands this. The Vice President of the United States understands this. Energy Secretary Chu was here as well. They get that there is this different future for us as a country. What we want is for all people to be able to participate in that different

energy future. It is this future that will come over time and it will come somewhat gradually, but it's good to be at the head of it. It's good for Colorado to be at the head of it. It's good for you to have the kind of training that allows you to be at the head of it.

If you look at just what's in the Recovery Act as it relates to energy dollars, the kinds of skills you gain at this academy are skills that can be put to use in fairly short order in a variety of ways.

The President committed clean energy money, clean energy technology research, as part of the Recovery Act, believing that at the same time we are trying to create jobs and stimulate the economy, we should be looking at how we embed in our culture this different sense of a clean energy future.

I'm here today to acknowledge you as veterans and to say that you are part of that future.

And that's something we need to do around the country, not just here at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and not just here in Colorado. We need to have this be part of our vision and ultimately part of our culture around the country.

Thank you for being willing to participate in this and for being the first group of graduates to come out of this program. It's such an honor for me to be here with you today and I wish you nothing but the best. Thank you.